

# Code of Conduct

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## Foreword

The Women's Housing Company is entrusted by government, the community and its tenants to manage its services and assets efficiently, fairly, impartially and with integrity. We hold an important position in the community that requires transparency, honesty, respect and fairness for all people we support and serve. As a not-for-profit housing provider, we make decisions each day that affect the lives of others. In everything we do, we are expected to act and be seen to act in the interest of those we are here to serve.

All Women's Housing Company Representatives are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct (the Code) in the course of their duties and when representing the company at any external meeting or event.

The Code explains the minimum standards of conduct and behaviour expected of Women's Housing Company Representatives.

Representatives are encouraged to discuss the Code with each other, at team meetings, during one on one's, and refer to it when making important decisions.

Active and open discussion of ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest helps to foster a healthy and professional organisational culture and one that can withstand the highest scrutiny.

If there is anything in this Code that you do not understand, please discuss this with a member of the senior management team.

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Version:	Final		
Approved by:	WHC Board	Issue Date:	December 2020
		Review Date:	December 2023

## 1.0 Women's Housing Company Corporate Values

The Women's Housing Company Corporate Values guide our actions and determine who and what we aspire to be. They are expressed through our interaction with our colleagues, clients, applicants and tenants, suppliers, partners and all other Women's Housing Company stakeholders including the wider community. We use our Corporate Values to make decisions that will align with our vision: **Empowering women to improve their lives through the provision of housing that is affordable**

### Our Values are:

#### Collaboration

Working together as a community housing provider and in partnership with others who share our concerns and interests for women

#### Integrity

Working with integrity and transparency within the community and in our relationships with others

#### Courage

Taking informed risks, embracing the new and standing up for what we believe to be right

#### Respect

Respecting the rights of tenants, clients, staff and the community

#### Focus

Remaining focused on our philosophy, strategy and priorities in a professional manner at all times and on specific issues during times of conflict

## 2.0 Purpose and Scope

The Women's Housing Company Code of Conduct applies to Board members, employees, contractors and volunteers (herein referred to as Representatives).

Representatives are responsible for upholding the integrity of the organisation and complying with the Code of Conduct. One person's misconduct can tarnish the credibility of all of us and make it more difficult to achieve our organisational objectives.

All Women's Housing Company Representatives are expected to adhere to the Code in the course of their duties and allow it to guide their behaviour, decision making and development whilst working for the Women's Housing Company.

The Code should be read in conjunction with the Contractor Code of Conduct, the other policies that are referred to in this document and within the context of our Corporate Values.

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### 3.0 Leadership Responsibilities

Board members and managers have an important role in demonstrating ethical leadership, and role modelling the standards of behaviour outlined in this Code.

Managers must demonstrate accountability for their own performance and behaviour as well as that of their direct reports.

Managers are responsible for the health and safety, and performance of their direct reports. They are accountable for addressing continued unsatisfactory performance and errors, misconduct and breaches of this Code and other company policies and procedures.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that their direct reports:

- understand and follow the Code
- understand and adhere to relevant legislation, policies, procedures and the corporate values
- understand their job, how they are expected to do their job and the results for which they are accountable
- have equitable access to learning and development opportunities.

Managers are also responsible for ensuring:

- they set a good example of ethical behaviour, accountability and open honest communication
- they acknowledge and encourage ethical and professional work practices
- the systems of work and the work premises and environment are safe and free from inappropriate behaviour such as discrimination, harassment, bullying and fraud and any other unlawful conduct
- they encourage compliance with the Code and ensure that its principles are discussed regularly through team meetings, one on one's and during the performance review process
- they take appropriate action on breaches of the Code and report major breaches to senior management
- that any breach or potential breach is treated seriously and professionally and managed promptly and confidentially.

### 4.0 Elements of the Code

#### 4.1 Accountabilities

Representatives are responsible for their own behaviour, performance and safety. They are expected to uphold the standards of behaviour and work performance communicated to them by their manager and within Women's Housing Company policies and procedures.

They are expected to follow work practices defined by their manager within their role and

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it is their responsibility to ensure they understand and implement those expectations and ask questions about any aspect of their work, policy or procedure that is unclear to them.

#### 4.2 Professional conduct

Representatives should behave professionally in all situations when working or representing the Women's Housing Company.

Professional conduct is defined as **exhibiting a courteous, conscientious and generally business-like manner.**

At the Women's Housing Company, this is demonstrated by how a Representative communicates, their personal presentation and how they conduct and present themselves at work, in meetings, and at external events, training and seminars.

The following are examples of acts that the Women's Housing Company considers unprofessional and unacceptable:

- offensive language, including swearing and racial slurs
- showing aggression through yelling or gestures
- refusing to follow or failing to carry out a reasonable instruction from their manager
- ignoring work duties or wasting time during work hours and serious delays in making a decision or taking action
- coming to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs or bringing illegal substances to work
- being absent from work without a valid reason or notifying their manager
- being continually late for work, events or meetings
- being wasteful or neglectful of company equipment or using company resources for un-authorised or illegal purposes.

#### 4.3 Discrimination, bullying and harassment

The Women's Housing Company has a zero tolerance for discrimination, bullying and harassment.

The Women's Housing Company will ensure that all decisions affecting Representatives and tenants are free from discrimination.

Bullying and harassment are against the essence of the Women's Housing Company Corporate Values and Code of Conduct and Representatives must ensure their behaviour

and actions do not offend, intimidate or humiliate any person they engage with in the course of undertaking their role.

**Policy Reference:** Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy

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#### 4.4 Health and safety

Representatives must adhere to the health and safety policy and report any accident, near miss or injury to their manager as soon as possible.

Everyone at the Women's Housing Company is responsible for health and safety. As a minimum, it is each Representative's responsibility to:

- immediately report any hazard or potential hazard to their manager to avoid a potential injury
- report any injury, accident or near miss to their manager as soon as possible
- ensure they know who their first aid officer and fire wardens are
- complete the WHS induction on commencement
- consider ergonomic issues that arise from their immediate workstation
- request any equipment they need to ensure their health and safety at work.

**Policy Reference:** Workplace Health and Safety Management System

#### 4.5 Corrupt conduct, gifts, bribes and hospitality

Representatives must not participate in any activity that is fraudulent or gives the perception of being fraudulent whether within the organisation or not.

They must not solicit or accept gifts, bribes, hospitality, benefits, service or favours. This may be considered corrupt conduct and certain types of corrupt conduct may amount to a breach of NSW or Commonwealth law.

In certain circumstances, declining a gift of nominal value may cause unnecessary offence. Gifts of nominal value may be accepted if they comply with the requirements of the Gifts and Benefits policy. The Women's Housing Company maintains a gift register, which is monitored by the Chief Financial Officer.

All Representatives have a responsibility to guard against and report instances or potential instances of fraud and corruption.

**Policy Reference:** Gifts and Benefits Policy

#### 4.6 Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a Representative's personal interest conflicts with or interferes with their ability to carry out their work impartially and in the best interests of the WHC. A conflict of interest may be:

- Actual: An obvious or demonstrable conflict of interest
- Potential: A situation arises where there is potential for a conflict of interest to occur
- Perceived: An onlooker may reasonably assume there is a conflict of interest.

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All Representatives will avoid any actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest with the primary responsibility, being the disclosure of the conflict in advance.

Conflicts of interest are particularly likely to arise where a Representative has a family or personal relationship with another party. As such, Representatives are required to disclose the relationships immediately where it may affect or be seen to affect the reputation of the Women's Housing Company.

**Policy Reference:** Conflict of Interest Policy

#### 4.7 Child protection - Mandatory reporting obligations and alternative reporting pathways

Women's Housing Company Representatives should consider the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people and, if their work involves contact with children and young people, comply with relevant policies and guidelines that apply to such work.

Women's Housing Company Representatives are 'mandatory reporters' under the Keep Them Safe shared approach to child welfare which was introduced as part of the Children's Legislation Amendment (Wood Inquiry Recommendations) Act 2009. This means they are legally obliged to make a report to the Child Protection Helpline if, during the course of their work, they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or youth is at risk of significant harm.

Women's Housing Company Representatives can refer to the Keep Them Safe Mandatory Reporting Guide or contact the Child Protection Helpline for advice about reporting requirements and related obligations.

**Policy Reference:** Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy

#### 4.8 Use of equipment and facilities

Representatives must be careful and mindful when using company equipment and resources. They must not abuse, waste or destroy company equipment and resources.

Use of company equipment and resources for personal purposes must be kept to a minimum and it must not be abused or impinge on the operations of the Women's Housing Company or the ability for any Representative to complete their work, impact negatively on the company financially through time or resource wastage.

Any use of company equipment must not be used for gambling, pornographic, racist or illegal purposes and not breach other Women's Housing Company policies or damage the reputation of the Women's Housing Company.

**Policy Reference:** Use of Company Equipment and Resources Policy, Motor Vehicle Policy, Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy.

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#### 4.9 Procuring goods and services

When procuring goods and services for the Women's Housing Company, Representatives must follow the Schedule of Delegations and the Procurement Policy and keep in mind our policies and codes related to conflict of interest, bribes and corruption.

**Policy Reference:** Schedule of Delegations, Conflict of Interest Policy

#### 4.10 Corporate Information

##### **Privacy**

Information kept by the Women's Housing Company will be kept confidential and only be used for lawful purposes.

All Women's Housing Company Representatives have a responsibility to keep employee, client and tenant information stored appropriately to ensure we do not breach our privacy obligations as directed by the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1988, the Australian Privacy Principles and the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002.

Record keeping and filing should be kept up-to-date and in a safe and secure location and only be used for lawful purposes as specified by legislation.

**Policy Reference:** Privacy Policy

##### **Confidential information**

Information which the Women's Housing Company has not released to the public via our website, the annual report, media releases etc. should be considered confidential unless otherwise stated by the Chief Executive Officer.

If unsure what information is considered confidential, Representatives should ask their manager or the Chief Executive Officer before disclosing any information related to the Women's Housing Company, its Representatives or clients via any means or medium.

##### **Public Comment**

Women's Housing Company Representatives must not make public comment on behalf of the Women's Housing Company to media, on radio and television or in the press, journals, books or other publications without the prior written consent of the Chair or Chief Executive Officer. Requests for information from media should be directed to the Chair or Chief Executive Officer.

**Policy Reference:** Schedule of Delegations

##### **Record keeping**

Women's Housing Company Representatives have a responsibility to keep full and accurate records of activities relating to employment, clients, tenants and tenant applications in the relevant record keeping systems and files.

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Our records are our corporate memory and provide evidence that we have followed proper procedures and the law in carrying out our work.

Record keeping and electronic and paper-based filing should be kept up-to-date as part of good business practice and to safeguard our privacy and confidentiality obligations.

**4.11 Other employment or business**

Representatives are required to disclose to the Women's Housing Company any external business or employment they are engaged in at the time or during their employment. Current Representatives wishing to undertake additional work or start a business must advise the Chief Executive Officer before commencing such activity.

Any additional work or other business activity must not adversely affect a Representative's ability to perform their role or give rise to a conflict of interest.

Women's Housing Company Representatives should not allow their participation in any other work, whether volunteer or otherwise, to impact their ability to efficiently and effectively meet their obligation to the Women's Housing Company or use Women's Housing Company equipment, resources and time to complete this activity.

Board members must disclose to the Board any interests in corporations, partnerships or other business that may be relevant to the activities of the Board. This includes membership of other Boards.

Employees must seek permission from the Chief Executive Officer before they participate in secondary employment.

The Women's Housing Company reserves the right to discuss any impact that the other employment or business may have on a Representative's work performance, the company's reputation or conflict of interest and manage any issues accordingly.

**4.12 Leaving the Women's Housing Company**

When leaving the Women's Housing Company, Representatives are required to return all documentation, equipment, passwords and security devices provided or obtained during the course of their employment or tenure in the case of volunteers.

After leaving, material, ideas and other work produced during the course of employment remains the property of the Women's Housing Company, unless there is an agreement in writing to the contrary.

During subsequent employment and activities, Representatives must continue to respect the confidentiality of information gained during their time at the Women's Housing Company and not use it for personal or financial gain.

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## 5.0 Applying this Code

The Code of Conduct forms part of a Representative's conditions of employment. A breach of the Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action ranging from counselling, further training and up to and including dismissal.

Representatives should be aware that criminal and civil legal action may be taken against them because of breaches of this Code where state and commonwealth law is breached.

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